



SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

A WEEKLY REVIEW THAT WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP-TO-DATE



If you have been forwarded this message and would like to subscribe to future publications or you wish to no longer receive future publications please [contact me here](#).

Vocational Education

The status and future of career-technical education (CTE) in California has been the subject of discussion in recent years. Often referred to as "vocational education," CTE is an important part California's public education.

What is Career Technical Education?

Generally, CTE is designed to prepare students for entry into the workforce and higher education. Ideally, at the conclusion of a high school CTE program, a student would be equally prepared to enter the University of California in an academic field, a community college or private postsecondary institution to obtain certification in a trade, or the workforce as an entry-level skilled worker. But, the reality is that CTE programs largely prepare students for the latter two options due to reasons that will be discussed later. CTE programs vary widely by authorizing agency, funding source, programmatic goals, delivery modes, and effectiveness. Some of the more notable programs are:

- Regional Occupational Centers/Programs
- Partnership Academies
- Apprenticeships

Together, these and other CTE programs operate at an annual cost of nearly \$500 million. When adult education, community college programs, and federal programs are included, expenditures reach well beyond \$1 billion in local, state, and federal funds.

Why is CTE Important?

Not every student will go to college. Surveys show that over 75 percent of tenth graders would like to attend a four-year university or a two-year college. Yet, as the Legislative Analyst has noted, fewer than half of these tenth graders attend college in the two years after graduating from high school, and fewer than 20 percent earn a college degree.

Why this disconnect in aspirations and academic achievement? One reason may be that they leave

News of the Week

[Legislators Urge Sex-Offender Free Zone from Schools and Parks](#)

[CA Supreme Court Justice Janice Rogers Brown Receives US Senate Confirmation...Finally](#)

[More Efforts to Enforce Sex Offender Laws](#)

[Runner's High Speed Chase Bill Moves to Assembly](#)

[6.2 Miles to Be Added to Hwy 14](#)

[Palmdale Chamber Applauds Governor's Efforts for Business Community](#)

[Runner is Considered as a Potential to be Senate Republican Leader](#)

[Briefing Report: Homeland Security](#)

high school unprepared. (Indeed, about half of California State University freshmen and one-third of University of California freshmen arrive unprepared for college-level writing.) Another reason may be that some of these students realize that they do not need a college degree. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 75 percent of the 56 million job openings expected through 2012 will not require a bachelor's degree, and almost 50 percent will require only a high school diploma or less. Moreover, BLS also reports that about 350 of the occupations open to high school graduates also have higher-than-average median earnings. Given the realities of the workforce, it is clear that CTE is – or should be – an important component of public education.

What is the Current State of CTE in California?

CTE in California schools is not what it used to be. There are fewer classes, fewer teachers, and fewer students. Why has CTE declined in California? One possibility is the law of unintended consequences. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, frustration grew over the inadequate academic preparation of students. "A Nation at Risk," published in 1983, documented these failures and caused policymakers to begin addressing the problem. By the late 1990s, California had adopted rigorous, nationally-renowned academic standards, had begun testing every student in grades 2-11, and had begun reporting individual scores to parents and teachers. California wisely dumped its failed experiment with "whole language" reading instruction and returned to phonics and scientifically-based reading instruction. The state adopted a high school exit exam—abandoning the previous system where each school district set its own graduation requirements and standards—so that a diploma would actually mean something again. These changes have shown promise. Reading scores have improved, parents paid attention to school performance, and schools responded to the pressures the exit exam placed on them. These are all positive results of the reforms of the 1990s, but there may have been some negative results, too.

CTE programs have continued to receive less emphasis. Growing concerns have arisen regarding those students not on the college preparatory track—and those not even on the high school graduation track. What could be done to prepare non-college bound students to compete in the economy? What could be done to keep the attention of students contemplating dropping out? Answers to these questions typically included CTE, and, in the past several years, various proposals for improving CTE have floated through the Legislature. Nothing went very far, however, until Governor Schwarzenegger introduced a CTE proposal in January.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In January, Governor Schwarzenegger introduced a seven-bill package to reform and reinvigorate CTE in California. Part of the package includes Senate Constitutional Amendment 10 that I have authored, which proposes changing the Constitution to include vocational education as a purpose of the education system. In addition, the Administration is proposing to require middle school students to take a CTE survey course designed to inform students of the opportunities in CTE. At the high school level, the Governor proposes \$20 million to expand the Tech Prep 2+2 Program. This program provides high school students with two years of study in core proficiency areas and a particular career field, followed by two years of focused technical training leading to an associate degree or technical certification. These proposals will help lead students to successful employment and participation in society.

It is important to ensure that proposals to address CTE are done correctly in order to achieve the desired results. Some believe all CTE classes must include an academic component that will "count" toward university admission. However, that academic component—largely driven by the University of California's "A to G" admission requirements—should not crowd-out true technical training. Others assert that all students must leave high school prepared for college. Those who

advocate this position forget that California is made up of unique individuals, some of whom are experts in their profession and are vital to our economy without the need to go through a "traditional" university path. Decision makers also must make sure that CTE programs do not devolve into dumping grounds for poor students. These programs should be challenging and rewarding pathways toward gainful employment. Efforts must be made to provide all students CTE opportunities and to minimize tendencies to establish two separate high school tracks. These are the challenges moving forward.

It is time to provide wider opportunities for young men and women to be challenged and led to success based on informed choices that they make with their parents.

**If you would like to contact Senator Runner, please click
here: [Email](#) - [Website](#)**

OFFICES

Capitol

State Capitol, Room 4066
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-445-6637
Fax: 916-445-4662

Antelope Valley

848 W. Lancaster Blvd, Ste 101
Lancaster, CA 93534
Phone: 661-729-6232
Fax: 661-729-1683

Victorville

Victorville City Hall
14343 Civic Drive, First Floor
Victorville, CA 92392
Phone: 760-843-8414
Fax: 760-843-8348

Santa Clarita – San Fernando Valley – Ventura County

Santa Clarita City Hall
23920 Valencia Blvd., Suite 250
Santa Clarita, CA 91355
Phone: 661-286-1471 Santa
Clarita Valley
Phone: 661-286-1472 San
Fernando Valley & Ventura County
Fax: 661-286-2543